

*Notes for our* **Sandbach Baptist Church BIBLE READING WEEK 2025**  
(Sunday February 16<sup>th</sup> to Saturday February 22<sup>nd</sup> — or any later week)

'I have covenanted with my Lord, that He should not send me visions, or dreams, or even angels. I am content with this one gift of the Scriptures, which abundantly teaches and supplies all that is necessary both for this life and that which is to come.' [Martin Luther]

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**As Christians we at SBC encourage you all to put your roots deep into God's Word, the Bible.** If you have attended church for some years, you will have heard many Bible stories. One is of particular relevance to all of us who are not Jews. It is the story of how the first non-Jewish Christian, the Roman centurion Cornelius (prompted by an angel), invited the apostle Peter to visit his non-Jewish home in Caesarea and to tell all of Cornelius' household whatever God wanted them to hear. Cornelius says this to Peter:

**'Now we are all here in the presence of God to listen to everything the Lord has commanded you to tell us.'** [Acts 10 verse 33 (NIV)]

In the warm spirit of Cornelius and his family, we invite you all to discover and hear for yourself what the Bible has to tell us today. Please to choose and read at least one from the list of six Bible passages we offer daily for our Sandbach Baptist Church 'Bible Reading Week.

Thus, on each day you can choose from any (or all!) of:

- 1) **One chapter from the Gospels.**
- 2) **One chapter from elsewhere in the New Testament.**
- 3) **One Old Testament chapter.**
- 4) **One Psalm or Proverbs chapter.**
- 5) **Pot pourri! Perhaps a famous or familiar passage.**
- 6) **One entire short Bible book or part of a longer one—to be read all in one go.**

By the end of the Week, you will thus have read some great passages of Scripture. We pray these will bless your heart and encourage you to dive deeper. We recommend that you explore readings beyond those very familiar to you—although you can choose ones you love, if you prefer.

**Other suggestions . . .**

- Try reading your Bible passage out loud! That's a great way to discover statements in the Bible that you have previously glossed over, or not noticed.
- Listen to your chapter on an audio Bible (e.g., by googling 'Bible Gateway Audio Free Online').
- I have also recorded a few chapters myself, as MP3 files, for folks with poor eyesight—please ask me.
- A Bible handbook, commentary, reading system or daily thought can illuminate Scripture for us—but first, let us make sure like the Psalmist that **'I have hidden your word in my heart...'** [Psalm 119:11 (NIV)]. And let us *depend on the Holy Spirit* to bring it to life, for and in us.
- Later, set up a 'Verse of the Day' on your phone, or a reading plan. (I use the YouVersion app).

I hope that the following Bible passages chosen for this SBC Bible Reading Week will enrich God's Word for you. They have done for me! Many blessings in Christ.

George Hill

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE BIBLE

It also helps to understand the structure of the Bible. Its 66 books can helpfully be divided as shown below. (NB—we count ‘double’ books such as 1 and 2 Samuel as two books, not one):

### OLD TESTAMENT — 39 books in total, containing:

|                                |                                |   |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| 5 books of LAW                 | - <i>the first is Genesis.</i> | Also called ‘The books of Moses.’       |
| 12 books of HISTORY            | - <i>the first is Joshua.</i>  | There is history elsewhere, of course.  |
| 5 books of POETRY              | - <i>the first is Job.</i>     | But they don’t rhyme in English!        |
| 5 books of the MAJOR PROPHETS  | - <i>the first is Isaiah.</i>  | There’s no prophet called Lamentations! |
| 12 books of the MINOR PROPHETS | - <i>the first is Hosea.</i>   | Minor in length, but not in value!      |

### NEW TESTAMENT — 27 books in total, containing:

|                           |                                |                                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 4 Gospels                 |                                | By Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.     |
| 1 book of ACTS            |                                | Another book by Luke.                |
| 13 letters by Paul        | - <i>the first is Romans.</i>  | To churches or to friends.           |
| 8 letters by other people | - <i>the first is Hebrews.</i> | Also by James, Peter, John and Jude. |
| 1 book of REVELATION      |                                | The author’s name is John.           |

In each of the NT sections (e.g., in John 1, Colossians 1, Hebrews 1 and Revelation 1) you will find great statements presenting Jesus as God. And the New Testament starts, and ends, with verses about JESUS.

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### Some rich thoughts . . . !

- *Try to read a Bible ‘Verse of the Day’. You can read one, or listen to one, on the YouVersion Bible app; or you can have one emailed to you daily by the Bible Gateway website.*
- *‘The Word of God I think of as a straight edge, which shows up our own crookedness. We can’t really tell how crooked our thinking is until we line it up with the straight edge of Scripture.’  
[Elizabeth Elliott]*
- *‘The New Testament begins and ends with verses about Jesus.’*
- *‘We need to know the Lord of the Book, not just the Book of the Lord.’* [Mark Stibbe]
- *‘Lay hold of the Bible until the Bible lays hold of you.’*
- *‘Our struggle to understand God’s Word is not because we don’t understand it; it’s because we jolly well do!’* [Alistair Stewart]
- *Who was the best businessman in the Bible? Noah, because he floated a limited company, when the rest of the world was going into liquidation!*

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### BIBLE VERSIONS

At SBC, we use the New International Version (NIV), 2011 version (some still use the 1983 version). The 2011 version is gender neutral (it uses gender pronouns only when they are *in the original text*). Also for a vivid reading, try The Message or the Living Bible; for study, try the Amplified; for beauty, try the NKJV or KJV; for simplified language, try the Good News (TEV); for young people, any good youth Bible. And all are free online—search for Bible Gateway or YouVersion Bible app.

# 7 days to read . . .

*Before you read each day, pray for God's Holy Spirit to open His Word afresh for you, to speak to you anew about Jesus, and to reveal His Father's love that sent Him into the world that God has lent us.*

**SUNDAY** of Bible Reading Week—choose one on the theme of OUR GOD WHOM WE WORSHIP:

- 1) **Luke 2.** [Our almighty Lord and Saviour entered the world—to live alongside us.]
- 2) **Hebrews 1.** [God's Son cannot be compared even with the angels. He is Lord.]
- 3) **Job 38.** [Job is challenged to be humble before his Maker. (Can go on to ch. 42.)]
- 4) **Psalms 95.** [(Known as the "Venite"). We all must bow down to God our Maker.]
- 5) **Isaiah 40** [The coming of the Lord and the greatness of our Creator God.]
- 6) **Philippians.** ["The letter of the joyful heart" (Jim Packer). Key verses: 2:10; 3:7; 4:4.]

**MONDAY** of Bible Reading Week—choose one on the theme of GOD'S PURPOSE AND CALL FOR US

- 1) **Luke 5.** [Obeying Christ's call and following Him into a whole new life.]
- 2) **Ephesians 4.** [Living a life worthy of the Lord, in unity and peace in the Spirit.]
- 3) **2 Kings 2.** [Elisha's obedience blessed many others. He was a forerunner of Christ.]
- 4) **Psalms 33** [We are called to rejoice in Him; to fear Him; to wait on & hope in Him.]
- 5) **John 3.** [What it means to be born again as a child of God. (Key verses: 3, 7, 16.)]
- 6) **2 John.** [We should exercise wisdom by following the true teaching of Christ.]

**TUESDAY** of Bible Reading Week—choose one on the theme of PERSONAL EXAMPLES:

- 1) **Matthew 8.** [The faith of the centurion; after which Jesus goes on to greater works.]
- 2) **Acts 4.** [The faith of Peter and John; the church's praises. (Key verses: 13, 20.)]
- 3) **Genesis 24** [Rebekah's kind and willing spirit; also Abraham's faithful servant.]
- 4) **Psalms 51.** [David's prayer of deep repentance and humble plea for forgiveness.]
- 5) **1 Corinthians 4.** [Paul acts as a fool for Christ in order to bless his children in the faith.]
- 6) **Esther.** [How to wisely and quietly serve God. Her courage—key verses 4:12-16.]

**WEDNESDAY** of Bible Reading Week—choose one on the theme of TESTING & GROWING:

- 1) **Matthew 13.** [The great chapter of (seven) parables. Where do we think we feature?]
- 2) **2 Timothy 1.** [Going ahead in the power of God's Spirit and in faith for the future.]
- 3) **Numbers 13.** [Advancing in faith as Caleb and Joshua were prepared to do.]
- 4) **Psalms 34.** [How we can trust in the Lord and thus live in hope.]
- 5) **Daniel 3.** [What a miracle! But the real lesson for us is faith. (A key verse: 18.)]
- 6) **1 Peter.** [A book to point us through suffering to hope, courage & God's grace.]

**THURSDAY** of Bible Reading Week— choose one on the theme of THE CROSS; FOLLOWING CHRIST:

- 1) **Luke 22.** [The Last Supper and His arrest. Peter's denial that Jesus had foreseen.]
- 2) **Hebrews 10.** [Christ's sacrifice was once for all. Now we have a new and living Way.]
- 3) **Isaiah 53.** [The Suffering Servant on who has been laid the sin of us all.]
- 4) **Psalms 22.** [The Cross and the One who suffered and gave His life for us.]
- 5) **John 19.** [Pilate hands Jesus over and He lays down His life, fulfilling prophecy.]
- 6) **1 John.** [The great challenge: God's love inspires ours. (Key verse: another 3:16!)]

**FRIDAY** of Bible Reading Week— choose one on the theme of GOOD NEWS IN JESUS, & PRAISE:

- 1) **John 20.** [Resurrection: Christ has risen! For Mary, the disciples, Thomas...and us]
- 2) **Ephesians 3.** [Our God who can do immeasurably more than we ask or even think.]
- 3) **Exodus 15.** [There is no-one like our God. And after every Marah there is an Elim.]
- 4) **Psalms 45.** [The King reigns; He calls His Bride; thus Christ calls His church to Him.]
- 5) **Song of Songs 5.** [Does our heart long for Him? Is He better than all others to us?]
- 6) **Colossians.** [ 'Christ-intoxicated' epistle for an unimportant church of ordinary folk.]

**SATURDAY** of Bible Reading Week— choose one on the theme of CHALLENGE & COMMITMENT:

- 1) **Mark 8.** [The disciples struggle to understand Jesus; He challenges them further.]
- 2) **Acts 2.** [In the Spirit's power we must follow Him and renew our commitment. ]
- 3) **Joshua 1.** [Joshua calls to God's people to be strong and to live by God's Word.]
- 4) **Proverbs 3** [Going forward with trust and confidence in the Lord. (Key verses: 5&6.)]
- 5) **Amos 5.** [A call to repentance, true worship, justice and righteousness.]
- 6) **James.** [Obey the word, don't merely listen to it! Faith without works is dead.]

- *And three final challenges! First, finish your journey by reading Romans 8. Then meditate on the Bible's shortest chapter—Psalm 117. Finally, have you ever read an entire Gospel in one sitting? Mark is the shortest of the four. Read Mark, learn and inwardly digest . . .*

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**Reading Scripture** is a mighty foundation. (Reading and meditating on Romans transformed Martin Luther; and the Chinese Bible teacher Watchman Nee used to read through the whole New Testament each month!)

**We need also to study Scripture.** After reading a passage, if you want the Holy Spirit to reveal further rich treasures to you than the plain text has done, begin by praying for His further guidance. Then you should ask yourself the following questions about the passage:

1. **Observation** — what does the passage actually say? Do I understand it all? How does it fit in with the rest of the Bible? (A study Bible or a Bible handbook can be helpful.)
2. **Interpretation** — what does the passage mean? What does the human author hope I will learn? Even more importantly, what is the Holy Spirit saying to me through it? How does it point to Jesus?
3. **Application** — how should I apply its message in my life and what light does it shine onto me? What actions ought I to take, in order that God's written Word has the effect on me that God intends?

## HOW TO USE THE BIBLE

We may need to reach for our Bible in particular circumstances. In that case, you would do well to keep this handy guide nearby:

- When in sorrow, read John chapter 14.
- When people fail you, read Psalm 27.
- When you have done wrong, read Psalm 51.
- When you worry, read Matthew chapter 6 verses 19-34.
- When you are depressed, read Psalm 34.
- When God seems far away, read Psalm 139.
- When you are discouraged, read Isaiah chapter 40.
- When doubts trouble you, try John chapter 7 verse 17.
- When you are lonely or fearful, read Psalm 23.
- When you forget your blessings, read Psalm 103.
- When your faith needs stirring, read Hebrews chapter 11.
- When you are in danger, read Psalm 91.
- When you feel down and out, read Romans chapter 8 verses 31-39.
- When you want courage for your task, read Joshua chapter 1.
- When the world seems bigger than God, read Psalm 90.
- When you want rest and peace, read Matthew 11 verses 25-30.
- When your Christian faith feels weak, read Romans 8 verses 1-30.
- When you leave home, read Psalm 121.
- When you grow bitter or critical, read 1 Corinthians chapter 13.
- When your prayers grow selfish, read Psalm 67.
- When you think too much of money, read Mark 10 verses 17-31.
- If you want to be fruitful, read John chapter 15.
- For Paul's secret of happiness, read Colossians 3 verses 12-17.
- For Paul's idea of Christianity, read 2 Corinthians 5 verses 15-19.
- For Paul's rules for daily life, read Romans chapter 12.
- For a great invitation and opportunity, read Isaiah chapter 55.
- For Jesus' idea of a Christian, read Matthew chapter 5.
- For James' idea of religion, read James chapter 1 verses 19-27.
- For Jesus' idea of prayer, read Luke chapter 11 verses 1-13.
- For a picture of worship, read Isaiah chapter 58 verses 1-12.
- For the prophet's idea of religion, read Isaiah 1 verses 10-18.